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Mt. Diablo school board approves \$2.7 million in cuts

By Theresa Harrington
Contra Costa Times

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CONCORD — In the next three years, most students in the Mt. Diablo school district will go without new textbooks because of state budget cuts.

Trustees on Tuesday cut \$2.7 million for instructional materials through 2013, as they seek to take more than \$69 million out of the district's three-year budget.

"I will support this, but I have reservations," said trustee Linda Mayo. "It's through improved materials that our students will advance more quickly ... Other states may continue to adopt new textbooks, so our students may be further behind."

The district's annual budget will dwindle from \$271.9 million this year to \$256.6 million next year, based on the governor's proposal released last month. The board has already cut more than \$23 million and is hoping to negotiate at least \$17 million in reductions through decreased employee salaries and benefits.

It will consider adult programs and special education for cuts next month, while looking at a tax ballot measure by the end of the year. Trustee Gary Eberhart is also pushing to reduce graduation requirements to save money.

Adult education supporters jammed the Tuesday meeting, waving signs and cheering loudly as more than two dozen students and teachers described the importance of classes they fear could be eliminated. Board members said they had received about 200 e-mails in support of adult education, which the state is allowing school districts to take money from to help plug budget holes.

"This board of education is not considering canceling or eliminating adult education," Eberhart said. "There may be some cuts, but we will not close the program."

To help maintain or restore district programs, trustees urged Superintendent Steven Lawrence to draft ballot language for a facilities bond measure that could support solar projects, distance learning technology, maintenance for the district's aging buildings and some campus improvements.

Board members agreed to hold off on asking voters to approve a parcel tax, because that would need two-thirds voter support. A bond measure could pass with 55 percent voter approval.

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More information about the Mt. Diablo school board meeting is available by calling 925-682-8000 ext. 4010 or by visiting <http://esbpublic.mdusd.k12.ca.us>. Click on the Feb. 23 agenda.

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